Factors Affecting Grade 9 Learners' Performance in English Language: Case Study of Saint Therese's Upper Basic School

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Abstract: This study investigates the multifaceted factors influencing Grade 9 learners' performance in English Language in selected schools within the Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC), The Gambia. English, as the official language and primary medium of instruction in The Gambia, plays a pivotal role in students' academic success and future opportunities. However, persistent underachievement in the subject signals deep-rooted challenges that merit systematic inquiry. This research aims to examine how socio-economic background, learner characteristics, teacher effectiveness, home environment, and school-related conditions collectively impact English language outcomes. A case study approach was employed, with Saint Therese's Upper Basic School serving as the primary research site. Data were gathered through structured surveys administered to a representative sample of Grade 9 learners, supplemented by interviews with teachers and parents. The study was guided by relevant theoretical frameworks, including Self-Determination Theory, Vygotsky's Social Constructivism, and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, to explore the interplay of motivational, social, and environmental factors in learning. Results show that 69.8% of respondents were aged 15–16, with a predominance of females (63.8%) and most (98%) attending public schools. Learner-related findings revealed that although 43% reported frequent reading and 44.3% expressed confidence in English, over half (53.7%) studied the subject for less than one hour weekly. While 59.7% rated teaching methods as excellent, nearly half (48.3%) indicated teachers only sometimes provided clear feedback. Home-related data revealed limited access to English learning materials (64.4%) and low parental support (22.1%), despite relatively high internet access (74.5%). School-level constraints included minimal library use (8.7%), inadequate textbook access (56.4%), and severe classroom overcrowding (94.6% of classes had more than 40 students). The findings indicate that poor reading and writing habits, insufficient instructional support, limited parental involvement, and strained learning environments are key barriers to English proficiency. Additionally, the influence of local languages, digital access disparities, and psychosocial pressures further undermine academic performance. These multi-layered challenges demand comprehensive, context-specific interventions. In response, the study recommends strategic actions such as enhancing teacher training in learner-centered pedagogies, improving feedback mechanisms, promoting parental engagement, increasing access to learning materials, and reducing classroom sizes. These interventions are vital for improving English language outcomes and bridging performance gaps in urban Gambian schools. The study offers practical insights for educators, policymakers, and development stakeholders committed to strengthening foundational language skills critical to national development

I. INTRODUCTION

➤ *Background of the Study*

Language is the bedrock of communication, serving as a medium for sharing ideas, expressing thoughts, and disseminating knowledge. Among the world's diverse languages, English stands as a global lingua franca, integral to academic, professional, and social interactions. Its widespread use has led many countries to adopt it as both a medium of instruction and a mandatory subject in educational curricula.

In The Gambia, English holds a dual role as the official language and the principal medium of instruction at all educational levels. Despite its significance, English language performance, especially among Grade 9 learners, remains a critical concern. Each year, numerous students fail to meet the expected proficiency levels, raising questions about the factors contributing to their struggles. Identified challenges include weak reading and writing skills, pervasive use of vernacular languages in schools, inadequate teaching methods, and the absence of conducive learning environments.

Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC), one of The Gambia's most urbanized regions, offers a distinctive setting to investigate these challenges. Characterized by its socio-economic diversity and concentration of educational institutions, KMC reflects the broader

difficulties encountered in teaching English within the country. Exploring the factors influencing Grade 9 learners' performance in English in this context is essential for devising effective strategies to improve outcomes.

➤ *Problem Statement*

Despite its role as a core subject and medium of instruction, English remains one of the most underperformed subjects among Grade 9 learners in KMC. Performance disparities highlight the multifaceted nature of the issue, which spans learner-related, institutional, and environmental challenges. While some students excel, many fail to attain even basic proficiency, raising concerns about their academic trajectory and future opportunities.

Several factors exacerbate the problem, including socio-economic constraints such as limited parental support and inadequate access to educational resources. Overcrowded classrooms, insufficiently trained teachers, and suboptimal teaching methodologies further compound the issue. Left unaddressed, these challenges risk perpetuating low performance, thereby hindering learners' academic and personal development.

This study seeks to investigate the key factors affecting Grade 9 learners' performance in English within selected schools in KMC. By understanding these issues, the research aims to propose evidence-based interventions to bridge the performance gaps and enhance educational outcomes.

➤ *Research Questions*

• What learner, teacher, and home environment factors influence Grade 9 learners' performance in English in selected schools in KMC?
• How do school resources and teaching methodologies impact learners' English language outcomes in KMC schools?
• What strategies can be implemented to improve Grade 9 learners' performance in English in KMC schools?

➤ *Research Objectives*

• To identify and evaluate learner, teacher, and home environment factors affecting Grade 9 learners' performance in English in selected schools in KMC.
• To examine how school resources and instructional practices influence learners' English language outcomes in KMC schools.
• To develop and recommend strategies for improving English performance among Grade 9 learners in KMC.

This study offers critical insights into the challenges faced by Grade 9 learners in KMC schools regarding English language proficiency. The findings served as a resource for educators, policymakers, and school administrators, guiding targeted interventions to improve teaching practices, learner support, and overall educational strategies. Moreover, the study contributes to the broader dialogue on enhancing English education in urban contexts, with potential applications across The Gambia and similar settings.

The research focuses on selected public and private schools within the Kanifing Municipal Council (KMC). It examines the factors affecting English language performance among Grade 9 learners, emphasizing learner-related, teacher-related, and institutional variables. Although centered on KMC, the findings may inform strategies applicable to other urban areas in The Gambia.

This study is confined to selected schools in KMC, limiting its generalizability to rural or other urban regions in The Gambia. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data from learners, teachers, and parents introduces potential biases. Despite these constraints, the study provides valuable insights into the factors affecting English language performance in a key urban educational context.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The educational challenges faced by students in mainstream schools are multifaceted, encompassing factors ranging from individual learning behaviors and motivation to environmental influences that shape their academic experiences. Understanding these challenges requires a thorough exploration of various theories and empirical studies that examine both the psychological and environmental components of student development and performance.

A. Theoretical Literature

Several seminal theories provide critical frameworks for understanding the challenges encountered by students in mainstream classrooms. These theories address individual learning behaviors, motivation, and the impact of environmental factors on student development.

➤ *Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985)*

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that motivation is driven by the fulfillment of three innate psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. In educational settings, students who perceive a sense of control over their learning, feel confident in their abilities, and experience meaningful relationships with teachers and peers are more likely to be engaged and achieve positive academic outcomes. However, challenges such as overcrowded classrooms and insufficient individualized attention often undermine these psychological needs, leading to disengagement and diminished academic performance.

➤ *Vygotsky's Social Constructivism (1978)*

Vygotsky's Social Constructivism emphasizes the social nature of learning, highlighting the importance of interaction between students and more knowledgeable individuals, such as teachers or peers. The concept of scaffolding, where teachers provide temporary support to help students reach higher levels of understanding, is central to Vygotsky's theory. In mainstream classrooms, factors like overcrowding and limited teacher-student interaction hinder effective scaffolding, which restricts students' cognitive development. Personalized attention is crucial for creating a collaborative learning environment that fosters cognitive growth, as advocated by Vygotsky.

➤ *Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (1979)*

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory emphasizes the interconnectedness of various systems that

influence child development, from immediate settings like the home and school to broader societal influences. This theory underscores the importance of understanding how multiple factors, such as family background, school culture, and societal pressures, shape a student's educational experience. In the context of educational challenges, issues such as bullying, peer pressure, and lack of resources can have profound effects on a student's academic performance and overall well-being.

B. Empirical Literature

The academic success of Grade 9 learners, particularly in subjects like English language, is shaped by a wide range of factors, including individual characteristics, teacher effectiveness, school environment, and external influences. Empirical research has identified several key factors that significantly affect students' language acquisition and performance.

➤ *Student Motivation and Engagement*

Motivation plays a central role in student success, particularly in language learning. Gardner (2006) asserts that both intrinsic motivation (interest in learning the language) and extrinsic motivation (incentives such as grades or future job prospects) contribute significantly to language learning outcomes. Alizadeh (2016) found that students who are intrinsically motivated tend to engage more actively in English language learning outside the classroom, leading to improved skills. Conversely, low motivation is often linked to disengagement, which hampers language acquisition (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000).

➤ *Classroom Environment and Teacher Quality*

The classroom environment and teacher effectiveness are critical determinants of students' performance in English. Cumming (2001) highlights that students in supportive, interactive classrooms perform better academically. Teachers who employ differentiated instruction, recognize diverse learning styles, and foster positive classroom climates tend to enhance student engagement and achievement. However, overcrowded classrooms and a lack of personalized attention can lead to disengagement, hindering academic performance (Tomlinson, 2001).

➤ *Parental Involvement and Socioeconomic Status*

Parental involvement is another vital factor influencing academic success. Epstein (2001) and Hill & Tyson (2009) found that students whose parents are actively involved in their education tend to perform better academically. Parental involvement includes monitoring homework, providing a conducive study environment, and valuing education. Additionally, socioeconomic status significantly impacts academic achievement, with students from higher-income families often having more access to resources such as private tutoring, technology, and educational materials (Jeynes, 2007). In contrast, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may face challenges due to limited access to learning resources.

➤ *Language Proficiency and Literacy Levels*

A strong foundation in first-language literacy is crucial for success in second-language learning, including English. Research by Verhoeven & Snow (2001) and Lesaux & Geva (2006) indicates that students with higher literacy levels in their first language tend to perform better when learning a second language. In regions where English is not the first language, students with poor literacy skills may face additional challenges, as they must first strengthen their foundational language skills before acquiring English.

➤ *Technology and Access to Digital Resources*

The integration of technology into the classroom has been shown to improve language learning outcomes. Studies by Warschauer (2004) and Chigona & Chigona (2013) demonstrate that students with access to digital resources, such as language apps, online dictionaries, and e-books, tend to have better English language skills. However, students in regions with limited access to technology are disadvantaged, as they lack the resources to reinforce their language skills outside the classroom (González, 2013).

➤ *Peer Influence and Group Learning*

The role of peers in learning is significant, particularly in a subject like English, which requires constant practice. Collaborative learning environments, where students work together in small groups, can enhance language skills, especially in speaking and writing (Johnson & Johnson, 1989). However, negative peer influences, such as bullying or exclusion, can diminish engagement and hinder academic performance (Smith et al., 2004).

➤ *Curriculum Design and Content Delivery*

Curriculum design and the delivery of content are critical to academic success in English. Snow (2010) found that rigid curricula that do not align with students' levels of understanding can lead to frustration and disengagement. Conversely, curricula that incorporate relevant, culturally responsive materials and utilize interactive teaching methods have been shown to improve student outcomes (Guskey & Jung, 2009).

➤ *Psychosocial Factors and Mental Health*

Mental health significantly affects academic performance. Research by Seligman (1998) found that students with higher psychological well-being tend to perform better academically. For Grade 9 students, the transition to adolescence can be stressful, potentially impeding concentration and learning abilities. Mental health challenges, such as anxiety and depression, can lower motivation and hinder language development, underscoring the need for schools to provide adequate mental health support (Roeser et al., 2000).

The challenges faced by students in mainstream schools have been widely studied, with empirical research highlighting various factors that impede academic success and student well-being. One of the key challenges is the lack of individualized attention and support. Overcrowded classrooms often prevent teachers from offering personalized support, which is essential for student success. Studies show

that students who receive individualized attention tend to perform better academically (Tomlinson, 2001; Motsch, 2008). Another significant issue is the lack of funding. Insufficient school funding is a pervasive problem that many schools face. Darling-Hammond (2000) found that well-funded schools typically offer higher-quality educational experiences, while underfunded schools struggle with resource shortages that negatively impact student achievement (Adeyemi, 2011). This lack of resources can further contribute to academic challenges for students. Overcrowded classrooms also present a major barrier to effective learning. Research by Bahanshal (2013) and Marais (2016) emphasizes that overcrowded classrooms reduce the quality of teacher-student interactions and hinder the ability to provide the support that students need. As a result, students often become disengaged, leading to diminished academic performance. Furthermore, the lack of access to technology exacerbates educational inequities. The digital divide is a critical issue, as students without access to technology face significant disadvantages. Studies by Warschauer (2004) and González (2013) highlight that these students struggle to keep up with assignments and academic expectations, limiting their academic growth. Lastly, bullying and peer pressure have profound effects on both student well-being and academic outcomes. Research by Kessel (2014) and Smith et al. (2004) shows that bullying and peer pressure undermine students' self-esteem, leading to disengagement from school. These negative experiences contribute to poor academic performance, further perpetuating the cycle of academic struggles.

C. Gaps in the Literature

Although existing literature provides valuable insights into the challenges faced by students in mainstream schools, there remain significant gaps. For instance, research exploring the intersectionality of socio-economic factors, gender, and disability with issues such as overcrowded classrooms or lack of funding is limited. Additionally, further studies are needed to explore systemic interventions that can address these challenges comprehensively, particularly at the policy level, to create more supportive and equitable learning environments.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a mixed-method research design, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors affecting Grade 9 learners' performance in English Language. The combination of these methods allows for a detailed exploration of the underlying causes through quantitative data, while qualitative methods offer rich, contextual insights into the experiences and perceptions of the participants.

A survey is used to gather numerical data that can be analyzed statistically. This enabled the researcher to identify patterns, correlations, and trends that are common across the student population. The quantitative data focused on measurable factors such as socioeconomic status, access to resources, motivation levels, and academic performance.

Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) is conducted with teachers, school administrators, and parents to gain in-depth insights into the challenges affecting students' learning. The qualitative approach helped explore factors that are difficult to quantify, such as the perceptions of educators and parents regarding the teaching environment, student behavior, and support systems.

The study employed stratified random sampling to ensure that diverse groups within the population are represented. The target population includes Grade 9 students from several secondary schools in the region, along with teachers, school administrators, and parents. Stratified sampling will allow for the selection of participants from different categories, such as gender, socioeconomic status, and academic performance, ensuring that the sample accurately reflects the diversity of the student body.

A total sample of 150 Grade 9 students was carefully selected from three different Grade 9 classes at Saint Therese's Upper Basic School. This sample size represents all the students currently enrolled in Grade 9 at the school, ensuring that the data collected provides a comprehensive overview of the student population. By including every Grade 9 student in the school, the study aims to capture a full spectrum of experiences, performance levels, and demographic characteristics within this specific grade. The decision to include all Grade 9 students ensures that the findings are representative and reflective of the academic environment and challenges faced by the students at this school.

The data collected from the student surveys is analyzed using descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, frequency, percentages) to summarize the key characteristics of the respondents. Additionally, inferential statistical techniques such as correlation and regression analysis is used to identify relationships between different factors (e.g., socioeconomic status, motivation) and students' English language performance.

IV. RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. Socio-Economic Characteristics of Respondents

➤ *Age of Respondents*
Figure 1 shows that the majority of respondents, 69.8%, are aged between 15 and 16 years. A further 16.1% fall within the 13 to 14-year age range, while 14.1% are 17 years or older. Additionally, 0.7%, representing just one student, are under the age of 13.

Section A: Socio-Demographic information   1: Age
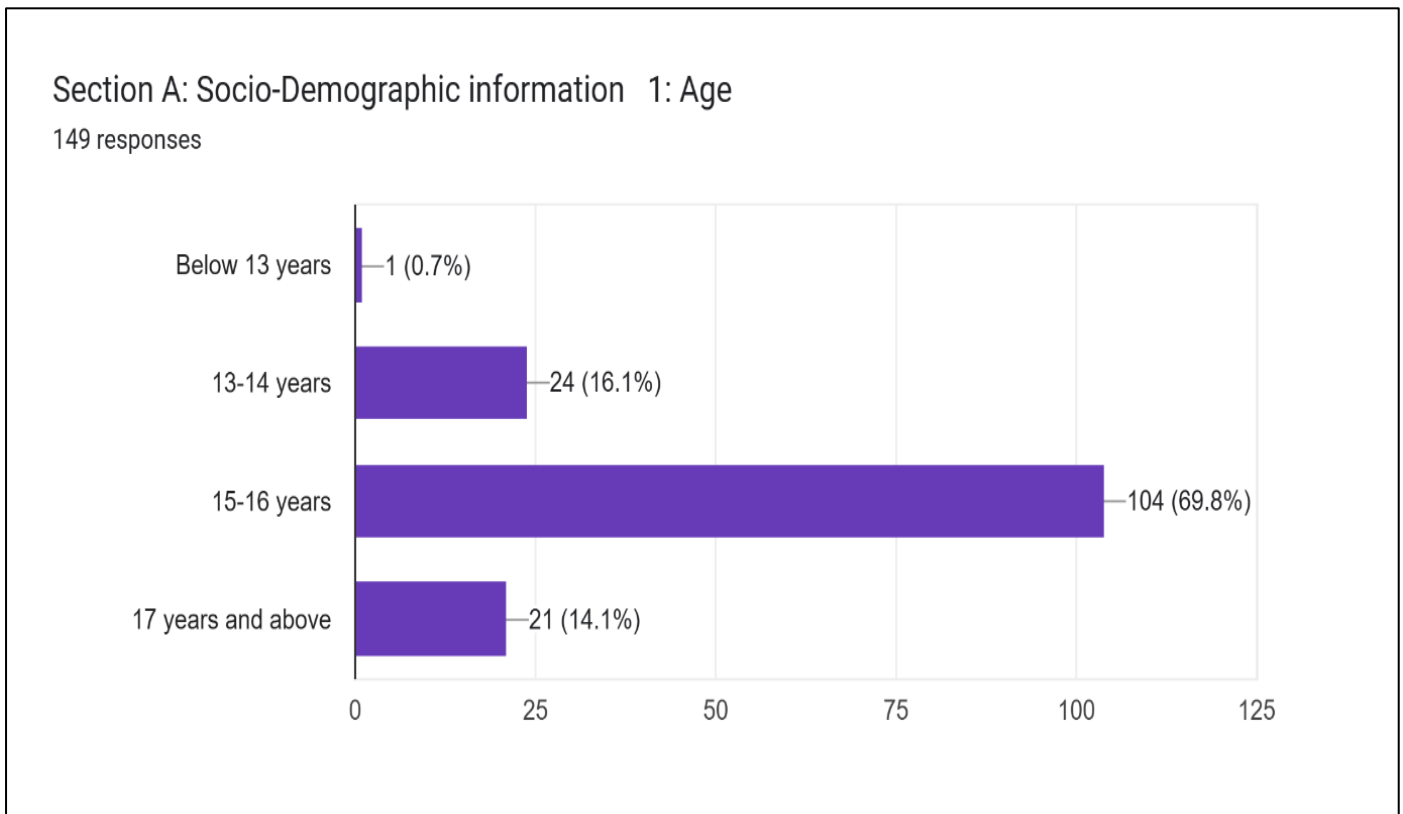
149 responses

Fig 1 Age of Respondents

➤ *Gender of Respondents*

The majority of respondents, 63.8%, are female, while 36.2% are male (see figure 2). This gender distribution offers insights into the student population and its potential influence on academic performance.
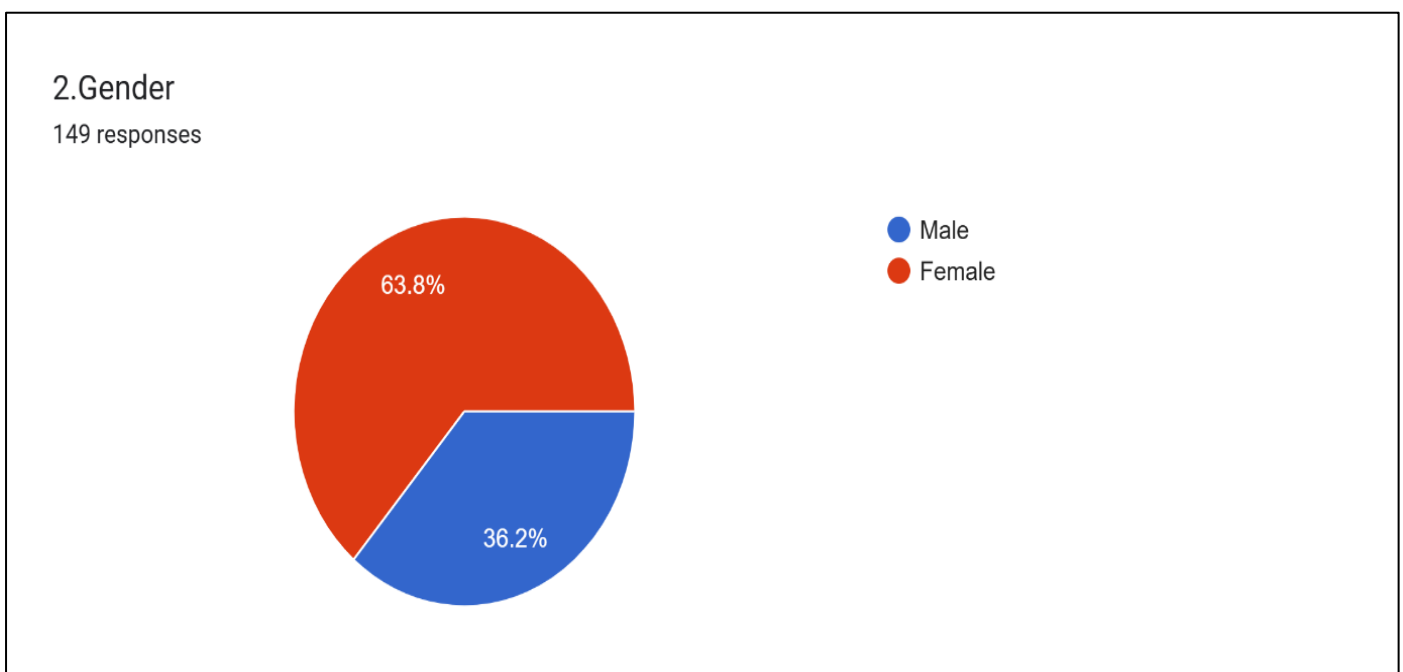
2.Gender

149 responses

Fig 2 Gender of Respondents

➤ *Type of School*

This figure shows that majority of respondents, representing 98% of the sample, are currently enrolled in public schools. This indicates a strong preference or reliance on public education within the study population, suggesting that access to public schools is more prevalent or preferred compared to private schools.
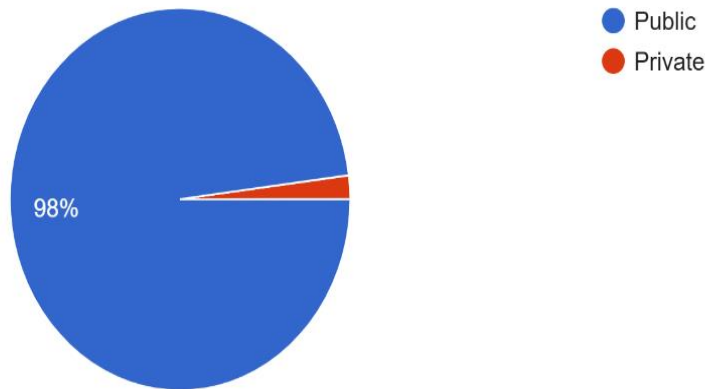
Fig 3 Type of School

➢ *Parental Education Level*

This figure illustrates thirty-nine percent (39%) of the respondents indicated that their parents attained secondary education, while another 39% reported that their parents reached the tertiary level. Additionally, 11% of respondents stated that their parents had completed only primary education, and the remaining 11% reported that their parents had no formal education at all. This distribution highlights a relatively balanced representation between secondary and tertiary educational attainment among parents, with a smaller proportion having limited or no formal education.

Fig 4 Parental Education Level

➢ *Parental Occupation*

Most respondents' parents, accounting for 39.2%, are employed in the public sector as government workers. Additionally, 27% are self-employed, 18.9% work in the private sector, while 14.9% are currently unemployed (see figure below). This indicates that a significant portion of the students come from households supported by government employment, followed by those engaged in self-employment and private sector jobs.

Fig 5 Parental Occupation

B. Identification and Evaluation of Learner, Teacher, and Home Environment Factors affecting Grade 9 Learners' Performance in English in Selected Schools in KMC.

➢ *Frequency of Reading*

Most respondents (43%) reported reading often, while 30.9% read occasionally. A smaller portion (22.1%) said they always read, and only 4% indicated they do not read at all (see figure below). These results suggest that most students engage in reading regularly, though a small percentage may need support to develop better reading habits.
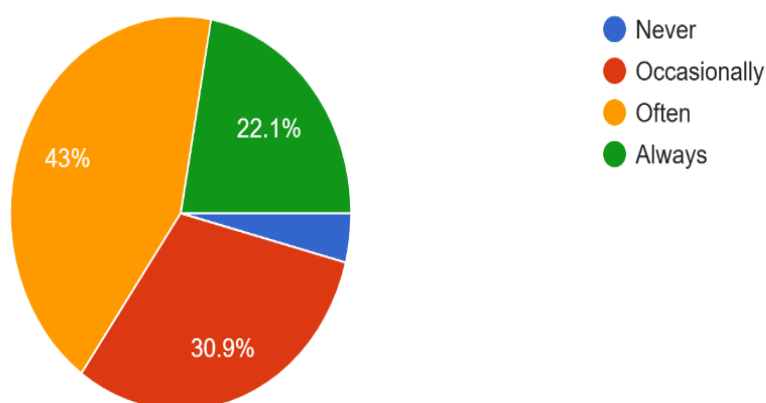
Fig 6 Frequency of Reading

➢ *Studying English*

These findings suggest that majority of students have a favourable attitude toward learning English, which could potentially contribute to better academic performance in the subject. However, the small percentage of students who express little to no enjoyment highlights the need for targeted strategies to engage these learners (see figure below). Understanding the reasons behind their lack of interest could help educators design more effective and engaging teaching methods, ensuring that all students find the subject more appealing and relevant to their educational journey.
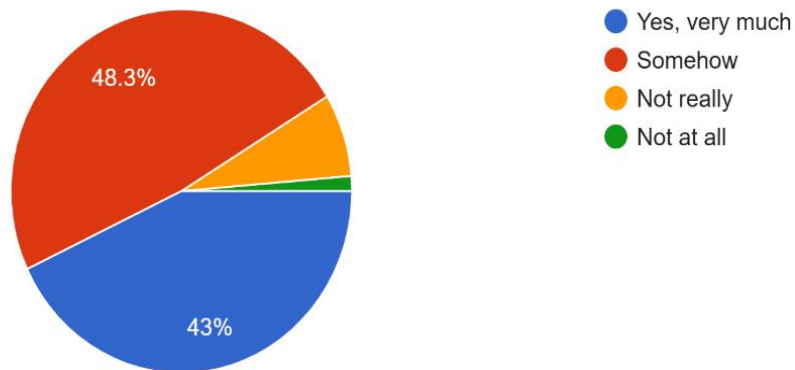
Fig 7 Studying English

➤ *Confidence in English Language Skills*

This figure shows majority of respondents, 44.3%, reported being confident in their English language skills, indicating a general sense of self-assurance in their abilities. A further 32.2% of students expressed a neutral stance, neither overly confident nor lacking confidence. Additionally, 17.4% of respondents were very confident, showcasing a strong belief in their language proficiency. However, 6% of the students admitted to not feeling confident in their English language skills, highlighting an area for potential improvement. This variation in confidence levels underscores the need for tailored support strategies to address the diverse needs of students in mastering the English language.
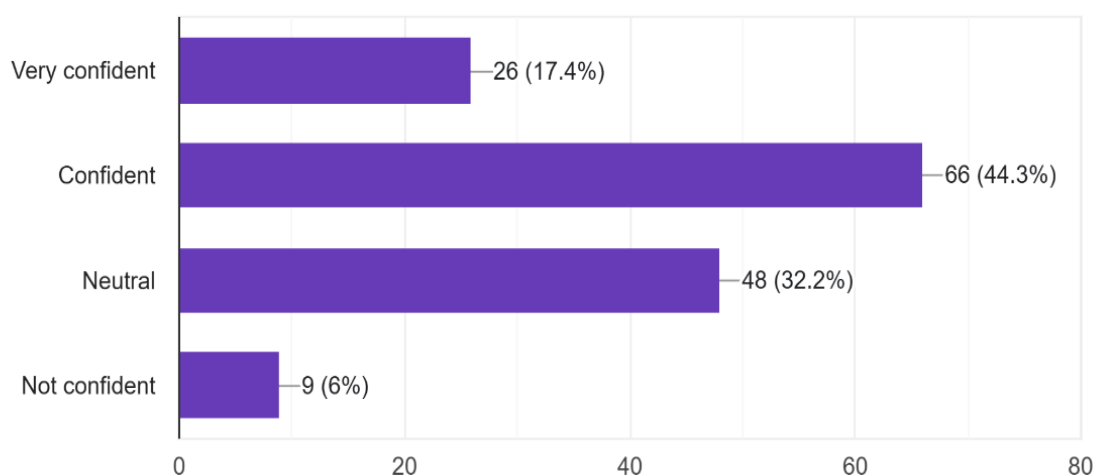
Fig 8 Confidence in English Language Skills

➤ *Duration of Studying English Each Week*

This figure illustrates majority of respondents, 53.7%, reported spending less than one hour per week studying English, indicating limited engagement with the subject (see figure 9). A further 37.6% stated that they dedicated between one to three hours each week to studying English. Additionally, 6.7% of respondents spent four to six hours on English studies, while less than 2% reported studying for more than six hours per week. This data suggests that a significant portion of students may not be dedicating enough time to improve their English language skills.
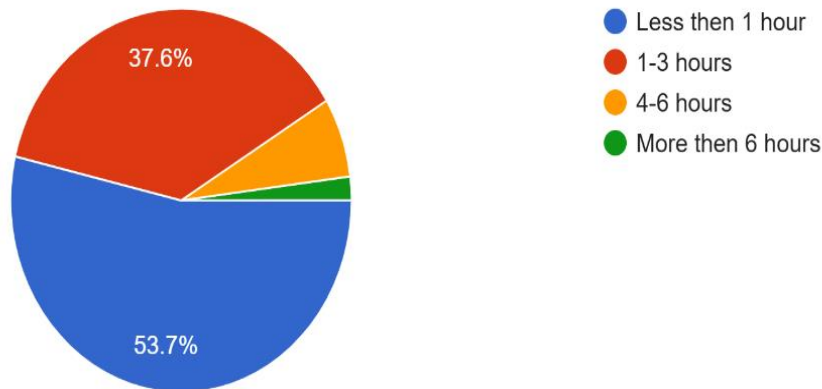
Fig 9 Duration of Studying English Each Week

➢ *Frequency of Teacher's opportunities for Class Discussions in English*

Most of the respondents, 49%, indicated that their teachers always offer opportunities for class discussions in English, the highest percentage. Additionally, 38.9% reported that such opportunities are provided sometimes, while 8.1% stated that discussions in English occur often. Only 4.7% of respondents mentioned that their teachers rarely facilitate class discussions in English (see figure below). This indicates that while many teachers incorporate discussions in English, there is potential for more consistent engagement in the classroom.
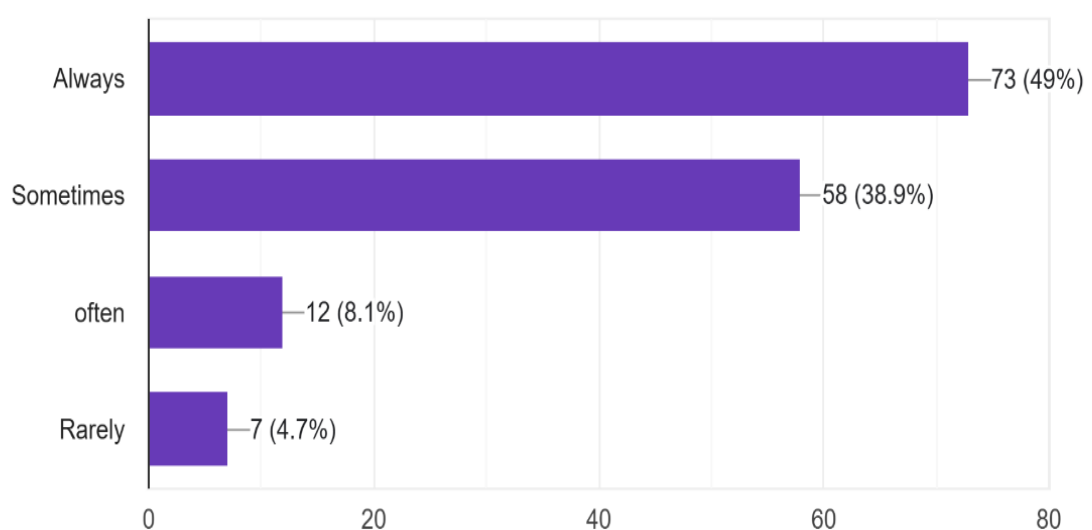
Fig 10 Frequency of Teacher's Opportunities for Class Discussion in English

➢ *Rating of Teacher's Teaching Methods*

The majority of respondents, 59.7%, rated their teacher's teaching method as "excellent." Meanwhile, 25.5% of respondents considered the teaching method to be "good," and 14.1% rated it as "average" (see figure below). Only 1.3% of respondents described the teaching method as "poor." This suggests that most students are generally satisfied with the teaching methods employed by their instructors.
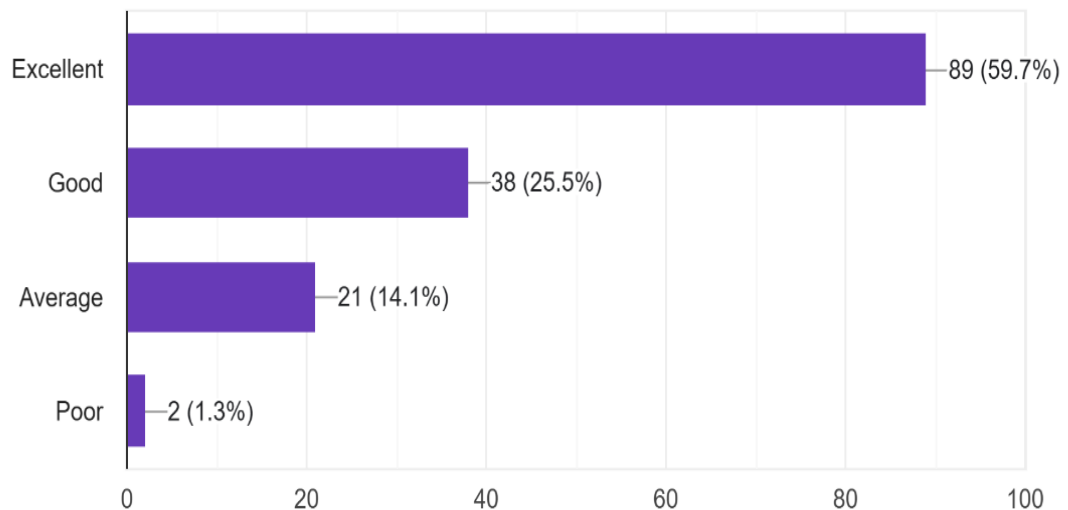
Fig 11 Rating of Teacher's Teaching Methods

➢ *Providing Feedback on English Assignments and Tests*

This figure shows that is 48.3% of respondents affirmed that their teachers "sometimes" provide clear feedback on English assignments and tests, while 43.6% stated that their teachers "always" offer clear feedback. Additionally, 5.1% of respondents indicated that their teachers "often" provide clear feedback, and 3% noted that their teachers "never" provide clear feedback on assignments and tests.
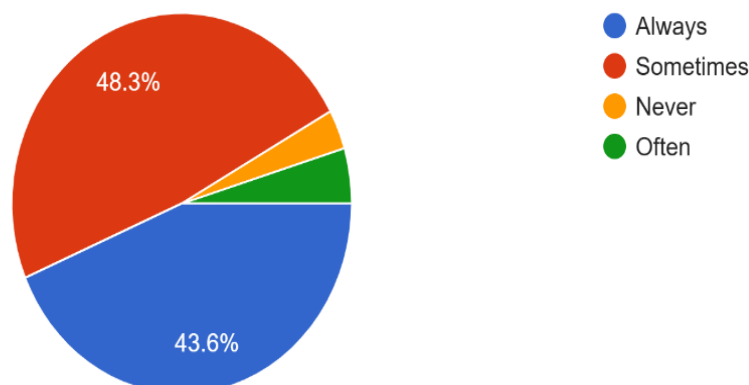

Fig 12 Providing Feedback on English Assignments and Tests

➤ *Description of Relationship Between your English Teacher*

Majority of respondent, 45.6%, asserted that the relationship with their English teacher is "supportive," while 26.2% described it as "neutral," 21.5% considered it "very supportive," and 6.7% found it "unsupportive" (see figure below). This distribution highlights the varying perceptions of teacher-student relationships and suggests that enhancing teacher training and classroom dynamics could foster a more inclusive and supportive learning environment. Strengthening these relationships could significantly improve students' motivation, confidence, and overall academic success in English.
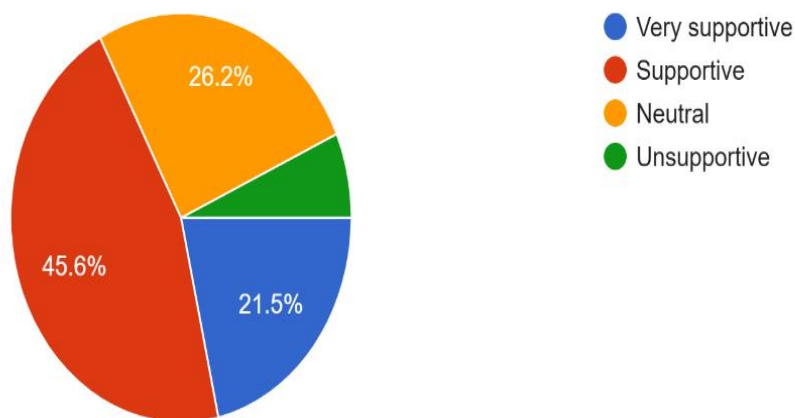

Fig 13 Description of Relationship Between your English Teacher

➤ *Teaching Methodology uses most Often by your Teacher*

The majority of respondents, 59.7%, rated their teacher's teaching method as "excellent," while 24.5% considered it "good," 14.1% rated it as "average," and 1.3% rated it as "poor." This indicates that a significant portion of students are satisfied with their teacher's approach, though there is still room for improvement to ensure that all students are fully engaged and supported in their learning.
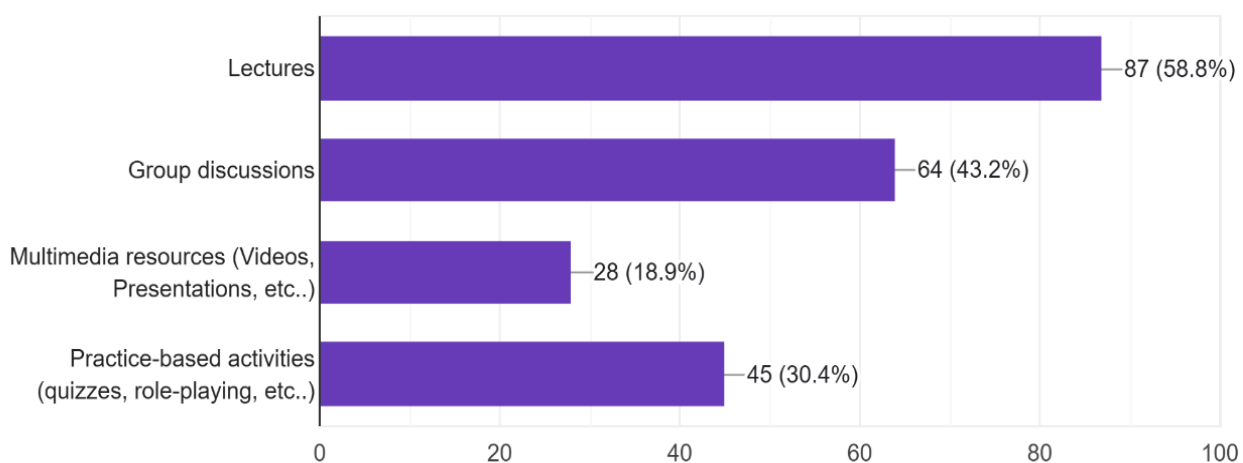

Fig 14 Teaching Methods used Most Often by your Teachers

➢ *Home Environment and Socioeconomic Factors*

• *Accessibility to English Learning Materials*
The majority of respondents, 64.4%, indicated limited access to resources, while 27.5% reported having access to many resources.

However, 8.1% of respondents noted that they have no access to resources at all (see figure below). These disparities in resource availability within students' home environments may significantly impact their academic performance and overall educational experience.
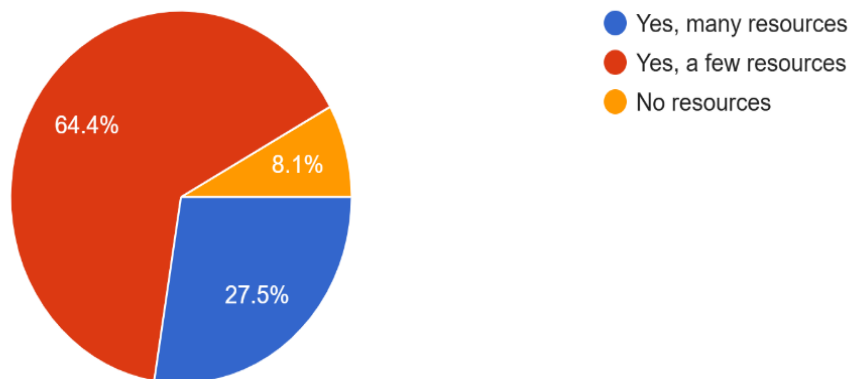

Fig 15 Accessibility to English Learning Materials at Home

➢ *Frequency of Guidance Assistance with your English Studies*
The level of parental involvement in students' English studies varies. The highest percentage 44.3 % of respondents reported that their parents "sometimes" help with English studies, 22.8% said they "often" receive help, 22.1% stated their parents "always" help, and10.7% said their parents "never" assist (see figure below). This

variation suggests that students with more consistent parental support may have greater success in their English studies, while those without this support may struggle more. Encouraging increased parental involvement could help improve students' academic outcomes, particularly in English.
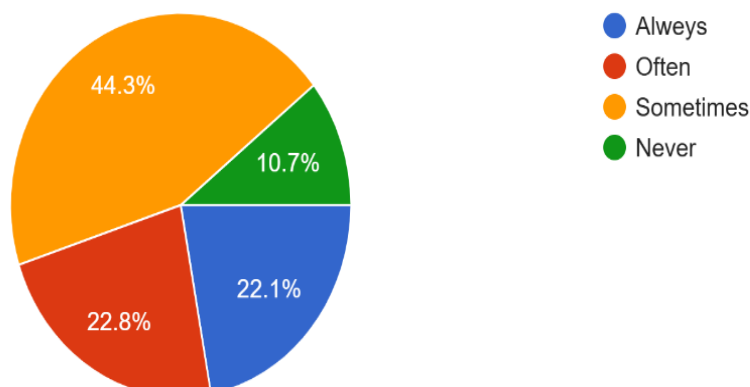

Fig 16 Frequency of Guidance Assistance with your English Studies

➢ *Availability of Internet Access to Support Learning*

The highest number of respondents, 74.5%, reported to having access to the internet to support their learning, 25.5% indicated they do not have internet access for educational purposes (see figure below). The availability of internet access can significantly enhance students' ability to research, complete assignments, and engage with online educational resources. However, for the twenty-five-point-five percent (25.5%) without access, this limitation may hinder their academic progress and opportunities for self-directed learning (see figure below).
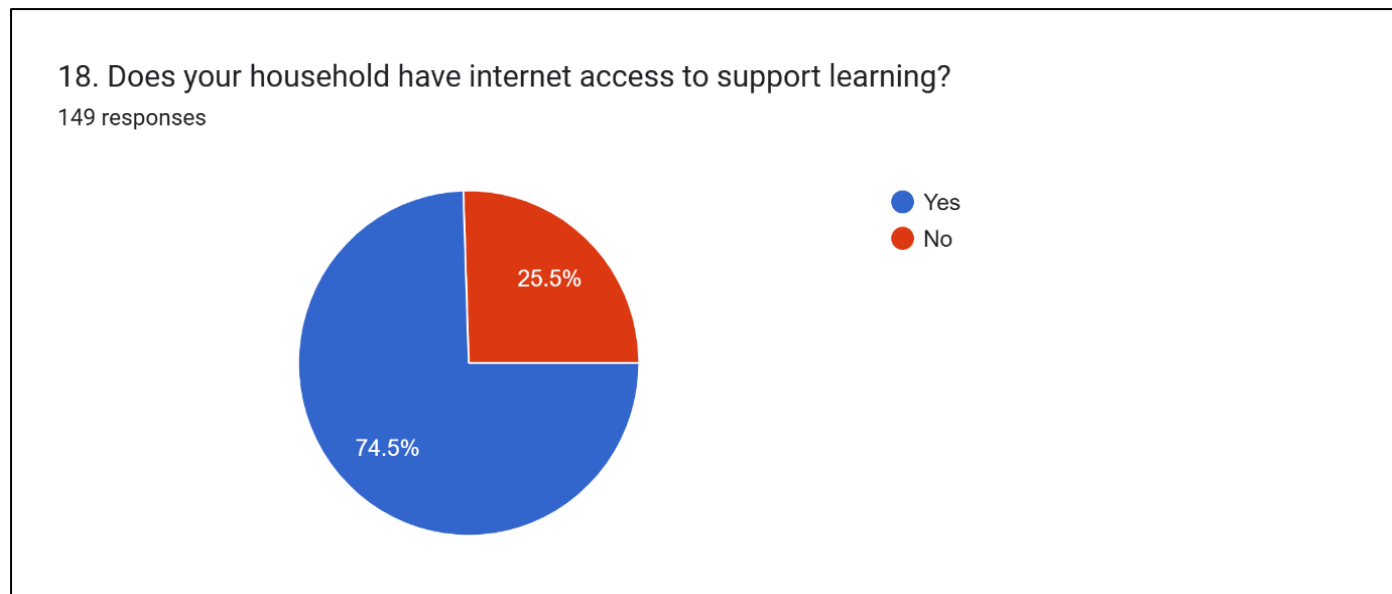

Fig 17 Availability of Internet Access to Support Learning

C. Examination of how School Resources and Instructional Practices Influence Learners' English Language outcomes in KMC Schools.

➢ *Frequency of using the School Library for English Learning*

The majority of respondents, 38.9% affirmed that they "often" use the school library for English learning, while 30.2% asserted that they "occasionally" use it. However, 22.1% stated that they "never" use the school library for English learning, and 8.7% of respondents indicated that they "always" use the library for this purpose (see figure below). This suggests that while many students recognize the library as a resource for learning, a significant portion either does not use it regularly or lacks access to it. These trends highlight the importance of improving library utilization and access for students to enhance their English learning experience.
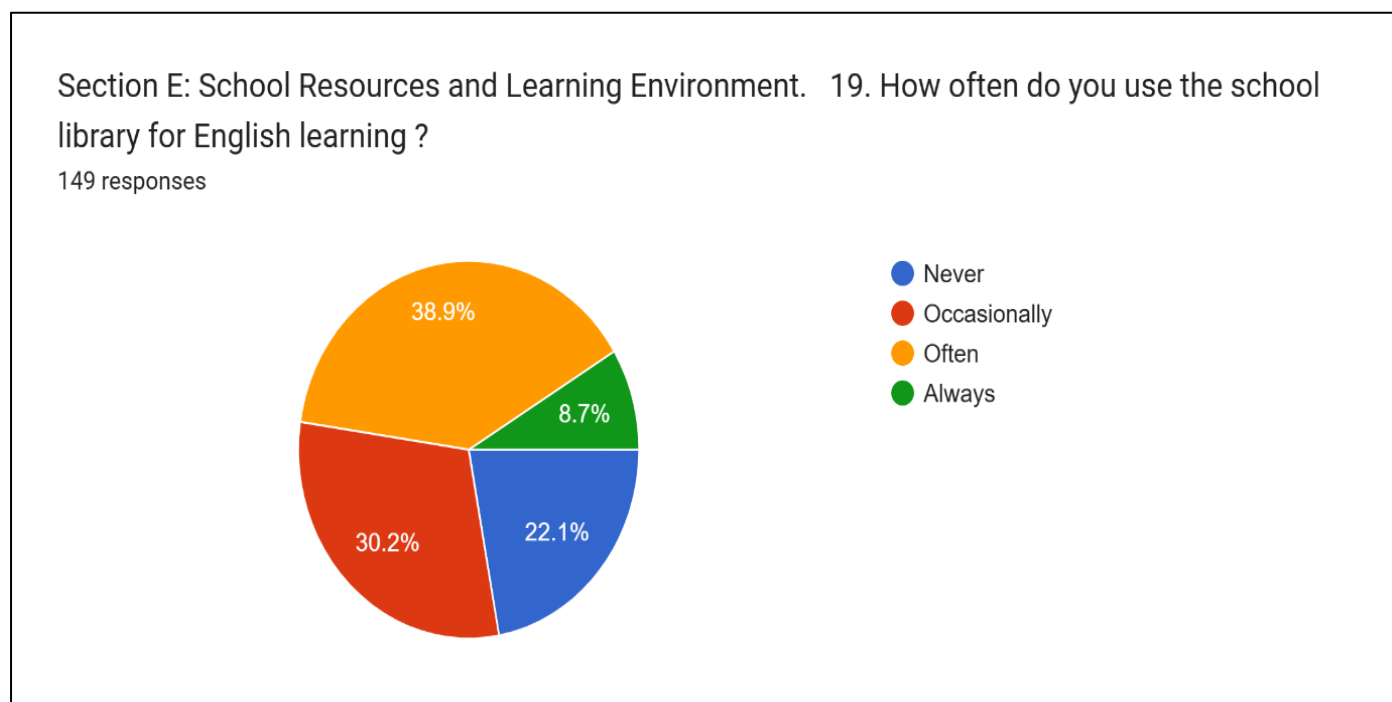

Fig 18 Frequency of using the School Library for English Learning

➤ *Availability of enough English Textbooks for all Students in your Class*

The majority of respondents, 56.4%, reported that there are not enough English textbooks for all students in their class. Conversely,

30.9% confirmed that there are sufficient textbooks for everyone (see figure below). This disparity highlights a potential barrier to effective learning for many students due to limited resources.
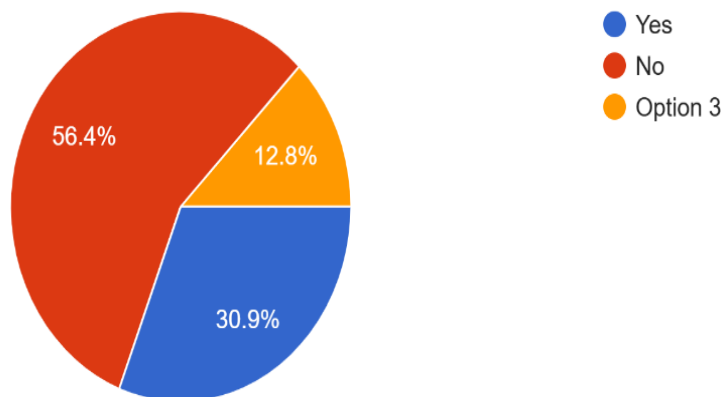

Fig 19 Availability of enough English Textbooks for all Students in your Class

➤ *Rating the Overall Learning Environment in your School*

The majority of respondents, 45.6%, rated the overall learning environment in their school as "excellent," while 43% described it as "good." A smaller percentage, 9.4%, felt the environment was "fair," and 2.7% considered it to be "poor." These results highlight

that most students perceive the learning environment positively, with a notable portion finding it either excellent or good. However, the presence of respondents who rated it as fair or poor suggests that there may still be areas for improvement in the overall school atmosphere.
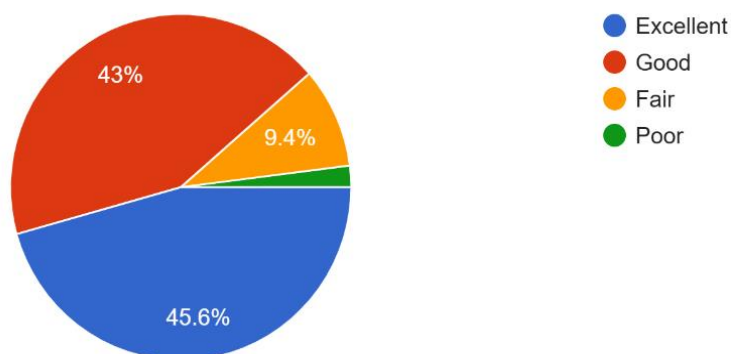

Fig 20 Rating the Overall Learning Environment in your School

➤ *Size of your English Class*

This figure illustrates 94.6% respondents reported having more than forty (40) students in their English class. A smaller group, 5.1%, indicated that their class size ranges between twenty to forty (20–40) students, while less than one percent stated that their English

class comprises fewer than twenty (20) students. This indicates that English classes are generally overcrowded, which may hinder effective teaching and learning by limiting individual attention and participation.
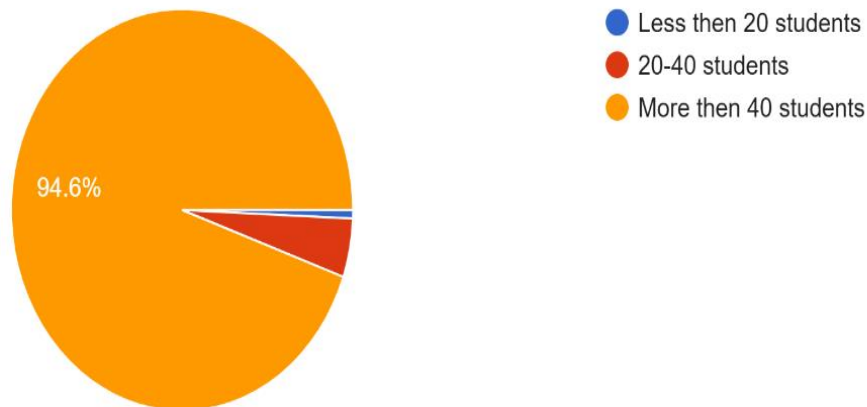
Fig 21 Size of your English Class

D. Strategies for Improving English Performance among Grade 9 Learners in KMC

➢ *Suggestions for Improving Performance in English*

The majority of respondents 77.9% indicated that more reading and writing practice would most improve their performance in English. Additionally, 36.9% believed that access to more learning resources would be beneficial, while 32.2% pointed to the need for better teaching methods. A smaller yet significant portion, 20.1%, stated that a smaller class size would enhance their learning experience. These findings highlight a strong desire among students for more practical engagement and better learning conditions to support their English language development.
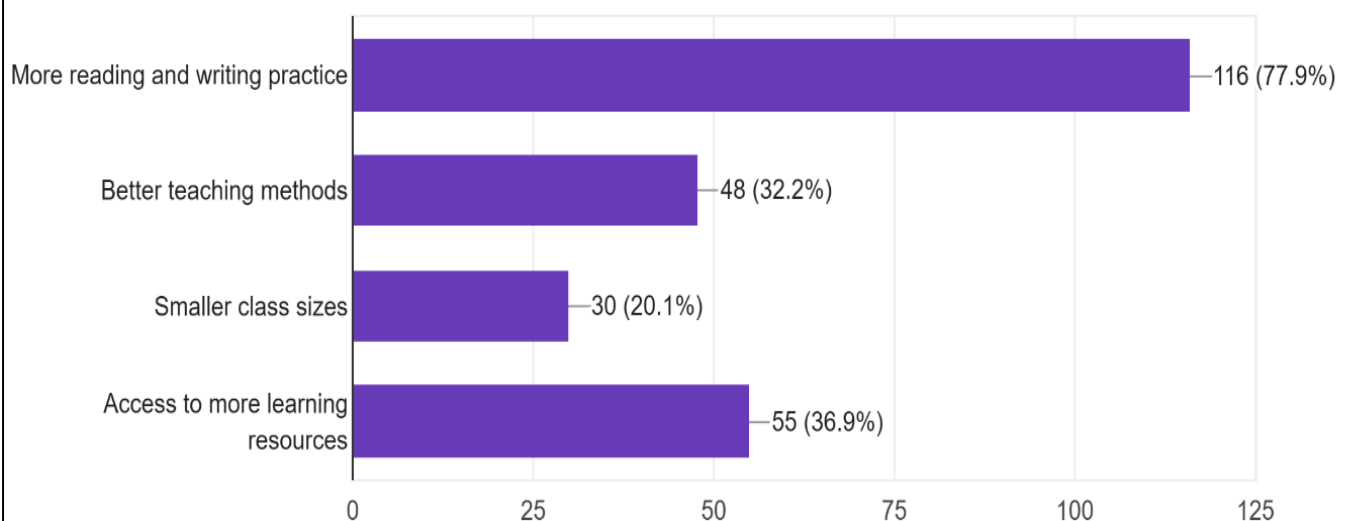

Fig 22 Suggestions for Improving Performance in English

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Conclusion

The study presents a comprehensive overview of the current state of English language learning among students. It is evident that while a considerable proportion of students demonstrate confidence in their English language skills, significant challenges persist that may hinder optimal performance. A majority of students rated their relationship with English teachers as supportive and described teaching methods as generally effective. Nonetheless, substantial concerns were raised regarding overcrowded classrooms, insufficient access to English textbooks and learning materials, inconsistent feedback on assessments, and limited opportunities for individualized support.

The home environment and socioeconomic conditions further affect students' ability to excel, with many respondents indicating limited access to resources and irregular parental or guardian support. Although a high percentage of students have access to the internet, its potential for supporting English learning is not fully realized. Students overwhelmingly indicated that increasing opportunities for reading and writing practice, improving teaching quality, and accessing more learning resources would most enhance their academic performance in English.

These findings highlight the need for targeted interventions at both school and policy levels to create a more equitable and supportive learning environment for all students.

B. Recommendations

To improve English language performance among students, several strategic interventions are recommended based on the findings of the study.

Schools should integrate structured reading and writing activities into daily and weekly lesson plans across all grade levels. These could include essay competitions, spelling bees, creative writing workshops, and sustained silent reading programs. Such initiatives will not only enhance vocabulary and grammar but also promote critical thinking, creativity, and communication skills. Teachers must be provided with adequate training and resources to effectively implement these activities.

A recurring challenge identified was the shortage of English textbooks and supplementary materials. To address this, schools, in partnership with the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education and development partners, should ensure the timely provision of up-to-date English textbooks for all students. Additionally, schools should establish well-equipped English learning corners in classrooms and libraries, furnished with storybooks, dictionaries, worksheets, and audio-visual aids to support diverse learning needs.

Large class sizes continue to hinder personalized learning and effective classroom management. Government and school authorities should adopt measures to reduce class sizes to a manageable level, ideally between 30 to 35 students per class. This can be achieved through the recruitment of additional qualified teachers, the construction of more classrooms, and the implementation of flexible school shifts, all aimed at improving the quality of instruction.

There is a need for continuous professional development for teachers. Schools should facilitate regular training programs focused on modern, learner-centered pedagogies such as communicative language teaching (CLT), the use of educational technology, differentiated instruction, and inclusive education techniques. Initiatives such as peer learning, mentorship schemes, and classroom observation sessions should be encouraged to promote collaborative learning and the exchange of best practices among teachers.

Parental support plays a vital role in a child's academic success. Schools should actively engage parents and guardians through functional parent-teacher associations (PTAs) and community sensitization programs. Workshops, reading assignments, and home-learning resources can empower parents to assist their children with English studies at home—even if they have limited educational backgrounds. Strengthening the home-school partnership is key to sustained academic achievement.

Given the widespread access to the internet among students, digital tools should be incorporated into the teaching and learning process. Schools should adopt blended learning models that combine in-person teaching with the use of educational platforms such as grammar websites, YouTube tutorials, e-libraries, and mobile apps. Teachers must guide students on how to navigate and benefit from these resources safely and effectively.

Providing timely and constructive feedback is critical for student improvement. Teachers should be encouraged to offer feedback that is specific, actionable, and motivating. School leadership should establish clear feedback guidelines and monitor their implementation. Tools such as rubrics, comment banks, and individualized feedback sessions should be utilized to help students understand their strengths and areas needing improvement, thereby enhancing their learning experience.

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